



NEWS RELEASE

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDES FUNDS TO UNITED ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. FOR HEARTLAND FOUNDATION

Greg Branum, Missouri State Director for USDA Rural Development, announced \$450,000 in funding to United Electric Cooperative, Inc. with Heartland Foundation emPower Plant as the ultimate recipient. The funds were presented in a ceremony on August 24, 2006; at Heartland Foundation's emPower Plant located at 502 Angelique, St. Joseph.

"The funds are part of the agency's Rural Economic Development Loan program," said Branum. "The 10-year, zero-interest loan is made to United Electric Cooperative which then advances the funds to Heartland Foundation at the same terms. The project competed nationally and scored well to receive the funding."

The USDA funds will supplement several other funding sources including the City of St. Joseph (through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Missouri Department of Economic Development's Youth Opportunity Program, St. Joseph Industrial Foundation, Buchanan County Commissioners, plus numerous other individuals and businesses.

U. S. Representative Sam Graves participated in the event. "This funding will help United Electric Cooperative better serve its customers," said Congressman Graves. "I'm proud to have supported this project. I am thankful for the excellent working relationship my office has with the USDA Rural Development team, and I look forward to our continued work in the future."

"This is a wonderful program that demonstrates how the U.S. government, through USDA Rural Development, can partner with local communities in an innovative program do what the communities deem as important and vital to the success of their rural residents," said Branum. "Funding important projects like this mirrors President Bush's initiative of being committed to the future of rural communities."

Gene Dorrel, General Manager, United Electric Cooperative said, "United Electric is proud to be a part of this project. The emPower Plant will be an asset to the students and adult citizens of northwest Missouri."

Judy Sabbert, Chief Operating Officer with Heartland Foundation said, "We are honored and pleased to be the recipient of these funds. This partnership will allow us to move forward with renovations of the facility and move us closer to seeing our dream come to fruition."

The Heartland Foundation's emPower Plant is a workforce development program with an in-school learning curriculum. Designed primarily for 7th and 8th grade students, the program lets students experience simulated community challenges in a classroom lab setting. The focus is on providing students with the civic activity skills to become responsible citizens. In addition, the curriculum and classroom experiences are designed to develop workforce skills, good citizenship and a commitment to the local communities by the participants. The



Pictured L to R: Jennifer Rolf, Senator Bond Field Representative, Emily Seifers, Senator Talent Field Representative, Gary Hull, President United Electric Coop, Sheri Spaker, Heartland Foundation Campaign Chairman, Judy Sabbert, Chief Operating Officer Heartland Foundation, Representative Sam Graves.

participants are likely to achieve more in terms of employment potential and to make positive contributions to their communities.

The program will have the capacity to serve up to 15,000 students and several thousand adults in a service area encompassing 19 Missouri counties, as well as several counties in neighboring states.

Heartland Foundation is a non-profit corporation whose mission is to empower all children and adults to continuously improve their health and quality of life in a 30-county area. The total construction cost for the emPower Plant is approximately \$3.5 million.

Branum added, "Appreciation is extended to U.S. Senators Kit Bond and Jim Talent and U. S. Representative Sam Graves for supporting USDA Rural Development. They have been strong proponents for the necessary funding for improving the quality of life of rural Missourians."

"Committed to the future of rural communities."

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